

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
OFFICE OF PERSONNEL  
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**PERSONNEL LETTER NO. 792-1**

**SUBJECT:** USDA Occupational Health Service Program

**A. General.**

In Budget Circular A-72, (copy attached), dated June 18, 1965, the Bureau of the Budget established criteria to be followed by heads of executive departments and agencies:

- (1) in providing programs of health services under 5 U.S.C. 7901;
- (2) in relating them to programs established to provide medical and other services; and
- (3) to eliminate health risks under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act.

In this Circular, the head of each Department was:

- (1) directed to review existing health programs, and
- (2) authorized and encouraged to establish an occupational health program to deal constructively with the health of the employees of his Department in relation to their work.

**B. Scope of Occupational Health Services**

The occupational health services defined below are to be provided at locations where facilities and staff permit:

- a. Emergency diagnosis and first treatment of injury or illness that become necessary during working hours and that are within the competence of the professional staff and facilities of the health service unit, whether or not such injury was sustained by

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the employee while in the performance of duty or whether or not such illness was caused by his employment. In cases where the necessary first treatment is outside the competence of the health service staff and facilities, conveyance of the employee to a nearby physician or suitable community medical facility may be provided at the request of, or on behalf of, the employee.

- b. Pre-employment examinations of persons selected for appointment.
- c. Such in-service examinations of employees as the department or agency head determines to be necessary (in addition to fitness-for-duty examinations which are performed under existing authority).
- d. Administration, in the discretion of the responsible health service unit physician, of treatments and medications (1) furnished by the employee and prescribed in writing by his personal physician as reasonably necessary to maintain the employee at work, and (2) prescribed by a physician providing medical care in performance-of-duty injury or illness cases under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act.
- e. Preventive services within the competence of the professional staff (1) to appraise and report work environment health hazards to departmental management as an aid in preventing and controlling health risks; (2) to provide health education, to encourage disease screening examinations and immunizations, as the department or agency head determines to be necessary.
- f. In addition to the above, employees may be referred, upon their request, to private physicians, dentists, and other community health resources.

Health services of the scope defined above are to be provided under the direction of a licensed physician. Nursing services will be provided by registered professional nurses.

C. Utilization of Staff and Facilities at USDA Locations with 300 or more Employees.

The establishment of an occupational health program requires the utilization of staff and facilities in the following order for those USDA locations with 300 or more employees (see Attachment I):

1. Utilizing an existing USDA health facility and professional staff in field service locations where the USDA health

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facility is located within a reasonable distance of the employee.

2. If no USDA health facility is available within a reasonable distance of the employee, but there are other Federal health facilities available and convenient, agencies must use these facilities.
3. If neither number 1. nor 2. exists at locations, agencies shall enter into an appropriate agreement with qualified private or public sources for professional services, including consulting services or facilities.

D. Occupational Health Services at USDA Locations with 300 or less Employees, but where there are a Total of 300 or more Federal Employees at the Location

1. Agencies must make use of other Federal health facilities which are available, and convenient to the employee.
2. If no Federal health facilities exist at the location, agencies are authorized to establish a health facility in cooperation with other Federal Departments or agencies.  
(See BOB Circular A-72.)

E. Occupational Health Services at USDA Locations with 300 or less Employees and where there are less than a Total of 300 Federal Employees at the Location

For locations where the Department has 300 or less employees and there are less than 300 total Federal employees at the location, the availability of one or more of the health services previously specified herein depends on a determination by the head of the agency that working conditions involving unusual health risks warrant such service. In such cases, where adequate staff or facilities as defined in Paragraph C-1, 2, and 3, do not exist or cannot be obtained to provide the service deemed necessary by the head of the agency, a recommendation should be sent to the Department Medical Officer, explaining the work hazards, the number of employees involved, and the health service which should be provided.

D. Reporting

The Department Medical Officer will issue instructions periodically covering the reporting of the number of health units